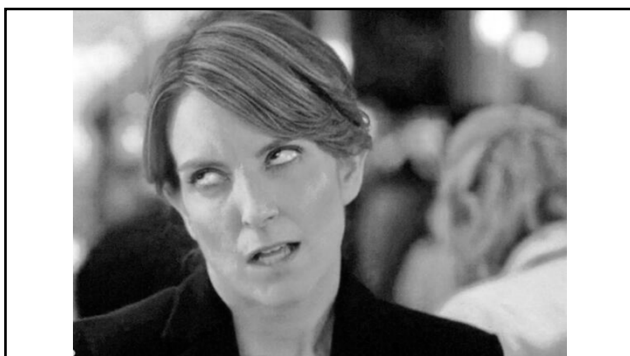
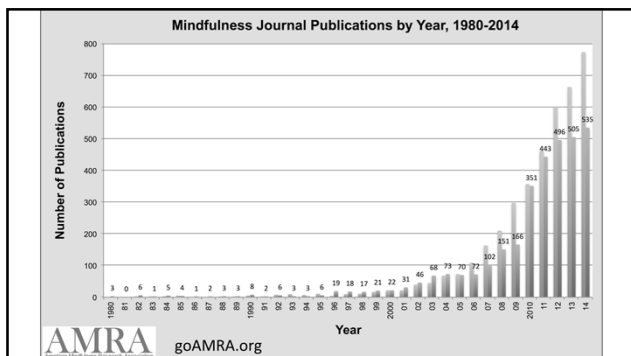


Mindfulness and the Mindful Public Defender

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Contemplative Science

Scientific inquiry into the effects of contemplative practices (usually mindfulness).

Studying what works in creating health and happiness.



What we'll cover:

What is (and is NOT) mindfulness?

How might mindfulness practice help me
as a Public Defender?

What are some **practical tools** I can use?

Not a religious practice...it's a mental exercise.

Take it or Leave it...

Be skeptical, but be curious.

MISCONCEPTION:

"I'm supposed to STOP THINKING"



MISCONCEPTION:

“Tune out the world...”



MISCONCEPTION:

“Think Happy Thoughts”

It’s not about replacing
bad thoughts/feelings with
good thoughts/feelings...

...it’s about changing our
relationship those
thoughts/feelings.



MISCONCEPTION:

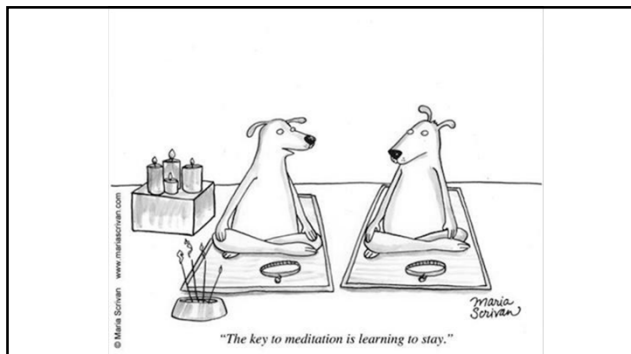
“I’m supposed to feel relaxed”

Don’t assume it will be
a “positive” experience.

It’s actually quite
ordinary.

Practice of Patience





So what *is* mindfulness?

"Mindfulness means **paying attention in a particular way**, on purpose, in the present moment, nonjudgmentally."

- Jon Kabat-Zinn

"...on **purpose**, in the **present moment**,
nonjudgmentally"

Intention: Commitment, Practice, Will

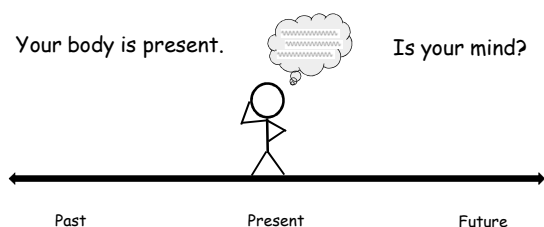
Attention: Here and Now (Body)

***Attitude:** Curious, Open, Accepting

Let's Try...

Close your eyes and listen.

Your body is present.



Is your mind?

Everyday Mindfulness

Intentionally paying attention to your sensory experiences.


Thinking mode → Sensing mode

Wisdom of the body

Notice the Mundane (brushing teeth)

Recognize your mindlessness practices.






Mindfulness Meditation

- ☐ Take a mindful posture.
- ☐ Awareness of the sensations of breathing.
- ☐ Notice (non-judgmentally) when your mind goes somewhere else.
- ☐ Return to the sensations of breathing.

Let's Try...

This is your Brain on Mindfulness

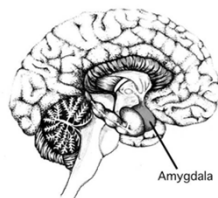


Amygdala

"Fight or Flight." Stress response, alerts us of danger (real or perceived).

Many problems associated with an overactive amygdala.

Mindfulness practice is associated with decreased gray matter in this area, and inactivity during meditation.



Prefrontal Cortex

Executive functions: decision making, planning, abstract thinking, emotion regulation, and moderating social behavior.

Mindfulness practice is associated with increased size and activation of the PFC.

The PFC shrinks as we age.

Study found that the 50 year old meditators had the same amount of cortex as 25 year olds. Mindfulness may slow down the age related decline in cortical structure.



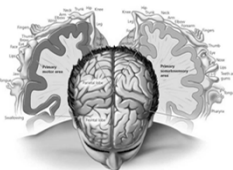
Somatomotor Cortices

Process tactile information, such as touch, pain, and awareness of body position.

Long-term meditators shown to have higher pain tolerance (or lower sensitivity?).

Mindfulness shown to **reduce perceived unpleasantness of painful stimuli.**

(Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction - MBSR)



Anterior Cingulate Cortex

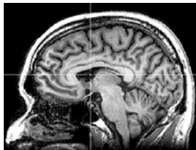
Executive attention and general process of “self-regulation”

Crucial for self-control, focused problem solving, and adaptive behavioral responses under changing conditions.

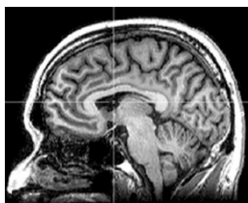
Decision-making, selecting actions based on anticipated outcomes. Activated during reward-processing, conflict monitoring, error detection, and pain.

Important during times of uncertainty/change and when multiple pieces of information must be considered.

Mindfulness practice may lead to **more conscious (less automatic) action selection and greater attention to thoughts and other information entering the decision-making process.**



Posterior Cingulate Cortex

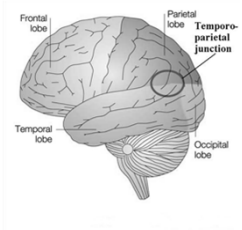


Associated with “mind wandering”

“Default Mode” (Autopilot)

During mindfulness practice, the ACC works with the PCC to increase focus, and therefore **decrease mind wandering.**

Temporo-Parietal Junction



Incorporates info from the thalamus, limbic system, and somatosensory systems.

Perspective taking, Theory of Mind

Morality and Compassion

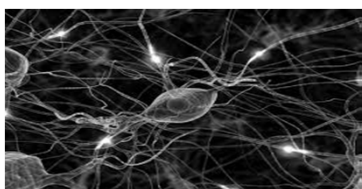
Changes in White Matter Pathways

Corpus Callosum: connects the two hemispheres of the brain. Facilitates “communication”.



Superior Longitudinal Fasciculus: a pair of long bi-directional bundles of neurons connecting the front and back of the cerebrum.

Neuroplasticity



Ability of the brain to reorganize itself through behavior and experience.

“Neurons that fire together wire together”



Your Remarkable Brain: Friend and Foe



A busy mind can be exhausting.

How much time do we spend on “Autopilot”?

Mindfulness cultivates your “Observer”

The Mindful Pause

Being mindful creates space. Replaces impulsive **reactions** with thoughtful **responses**.

Business as Usual

STIMULUS



REACTION
(Habits)

Being Mindful

STIMULUS



PAUSE



RESPONSE

Our brains are shaped by our habits, and habits carried out by our brains.

What if we got into the habit of being mindful?

The Mindful Public Defender



The Mindful Defender:

- ☐ Self-Care
- ☐ Sustainability
- ☐ Remember to notice the good...

The Mindful Defender:

- ☐ Attorney-Client Relationships
- ☐ Interviewing/Listening
- ☐ Caseload Management

The Mindful Defender

Preparing for Court

“Warrior’s Stance” (Confident, Grounded, Resilient)

Mindful Arguments

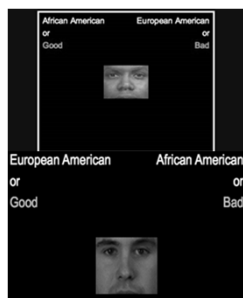
Know your stuff (don’t wing it), AND be present in order to engage skillfully.

The Mindful Defender:

Combating Implicit Bias

Lueke and Gibson (2014) found that mindfulness meditation reduced implicit age and race bias (IAT).

Reduction was due to **weaker automatically activated associations**.



Combating Implicit Bias

☐ Public Defender triage: How do I allocate resources? What are my assumptions about clients?

☐ Addressing bias in the courtroom.

Be willing to engage and sit in discomfort

Mindfulness is about **LISTENING**...

...to others...

...to ourselves/our reactions...

...in a non-judgmental, non-defensive way.

Takeaway

Mindfulness is **paying attention in a particular way**...(on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally)

Mindfulness Meditation is a **mental exercise** that has a variety of physical and mental health benefits.

Incorporate Mindfulness wherever you like...



3 Minute Breathing Space

Questions?
